

Conference on Theravada Kathina Tradition

Title for Presentation	: Kathina: The Lost Diamond
Prepared and presented by	: Ven. Saraṇa, (BPhil, Sri Lanka), Czech Republic; Shwe Oo Min Dhammasukha Forest Meditation Center, Mingalardon, Yangon
Place of Conference	: Shan State Buddhist University, Taunggyi, The Union of Myanmar
Date	: 06 th of November, 2016

Contents

1. The Rules of Research
2. Why did the Buddha Introduce Kathina?
3. Why and How Do the *Kathina* Privileges (*kathināṇisaṃsā*) become valid?
4. What was the Original Role of Lay People In the Event of *Kathina*?
5. The Significance of Kathina Today
 - I. Appendix I. – The Eight Ways That Lead to Loss of Privileges
 - II. Appendix II. – Donation of Kathina Robes according to Sīmā
 - III. Appendix III. Stories and Verses Misrepresented for Kathina
 - IV. Appendix IV. Benefits of Kathina Robe Donation (for lay people)

Kathina: The Lost Diamond

"*Kālena dhammasākacchā, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*"

"Discussing Dhamma at the right time, that is the supreme blessing."

1. The Rules of Research

Dear venerable sirs, dear lay people,

it is a true joy to participate in a meeting of educated, open-minded people, who are willing to discuss Dhamma and Vinaya. "*Āraññikenāvuso, bhikkhunā abhidhamme abhivinaye yogo karaṇīyo*"¹ (= "brothers, a forest-dwelling monk should apply himself to *Abhidhamma* and *Abhivinaya*"), said ven. Sāriputta in the Gulissāni Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya. Talk about *Abhidhamma* and *Abhivinaya* is particularly necessary if we intend to progress on the path to Enlightenment. Today the topic is *kathina*, a famous topic of *Vinaya*. The difficulties that we may encounter when we study *kathina* objectively, learning the traditional ideas of educated monks born in Buddhist countries, and then learning the confusions presented by the monks coming from the West, it is easy to realize how complicated and serious issue we deal with.

When we do a research on a topic which is complicated, controversial, or which may yield a dangerous, unacceptable conclusion, we, as Buddhist monks, should follow certain rules of objective research. Whatever we encounter in research, it should be well remembered, noted, analyzed, and questioned. Just like people's ideas should be questioned, the scriptural ideas also should be questioned. Didn't the Buddha Himself say in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*:

"Suppose a monk were to say: 'Friends, I heard and received this from the Lord's own lips: this is the Dhamma, this is the discipline, this is the Master's teaching', then, monks, you should neither approve nor disapprove his words. Then, without approving or disapproving, his words and expressions should be carefully noted and compared with the Suttas and reviewed in the light of the discipline.'"²

To Mahāpajāpati Gotamī the Buddha explained:

"Gotamī, those things of which you might know: 'These things lead to passion, not to dispassion; to bondage, not to detachment; to building up, not to dismantling; to strong desires, not to fewness of desires; to non-contentment, not to contentment; to company, not to solitude; to laziness, not to the arousing of energy; to being difficult to support, not to being easy to support,' you should definitely recognize: 'This is not the Dhamma; this is not the discipline; this is not the teaching of the Teacher.'"³

¹ *Majjhima Nikāya 69. Goliyāni Sutta (Gulissāni Sutta)*

² "*The Long Discourses of the Buddha – A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*", Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1995; p.255 . *Dīgha Nikāya – 2. Mahāvaggapāli – 3. Mahāparinibbāna Sutta – Catumahāpadesakathā - par.188* : "*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu evaṃ vadeyya – 'sammukhā metaṃ, āvuso, bhagavato sutaṃ sammukhā paṭiggahitaṃ, ayaṃ dhammo ayaṃ vinayo idaṃ satthusāsana'nti. Tassa, bhikkhave, bhikkhuno bhāsitaṃ neva abhinanditabbaṃ nappaṭikkositabbaṃ. Anabhinanditvā appaṭikkositvā tāni padabyañjanāni sādhukaṃ uggahetvā sutte osāretabbāni [otāretabbāni], vinaye sandassetabbāni.*"

³ "*The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha – A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*", Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 2012; p.1193. ("*Ye kho tvaṃ, gotami, dhamme jāneyyāsi – 'ime dhammā sarāgāya saṃvattanti, no virāgāya; saṃyogāya saṃvattanti, no viśaṃyogāya; ācayāya saṃvattanti, no apacayāya; mahicchatāya saṃvattanti, no appicchatāya; asantuṭṭhiyā saṃvattanti, no santuṭṭhiyā; saṅgaṇikāya saṃvattanti, no*

In fact, the most faithful people will not believe even if the Buddha Himself says it. The Buddha once mentioned⁴ that Sūrambaṭṭha was his foremost disciple in faith. After Sūrambaṭṭha became a Stream-Enterer, Māra the Evil One took up the appearance of the Buddha, came to the house of Sūrambaṭṭha, and said – "I have said that all of the five aggregates are impermanent, unsatisfactory, not-self. However, all of them do not have that character. Some aggregates are permanent, stable, eternal." Sūrambaṭṭha didn't believe immediately what this fake Buddha said. He examined it carefully and realized that it is wrong. Sūrambaṭṭha therefore asked: "Aren't you Māra?" And Māra had to reply: "Yes, I am Māra." Although Māra had appearance of the Buddha Himself, Sūrambaṭṭha took a stick and "*accharam pahari*," beat up (Māra,) the deity. Because of this act the Buddha praised Sūrambaṭṭha as the most faithful disciple!

Well, so if we shouldn't believe even the appearance of the Buddha, then we certainly should not believe papers with ink, lifeless, void of personality. As wise researchers, conscientious, objective, truth-seeking, unattached to our views, we read and consider all possible sources, together with their background and circumstances. Then, when we finish our research, we should not make definitive, decisive controversial conclusions. Researchers, just like theoretic physicists, do not make definitive, decisive controversial conclusions. It is the responsibility of higher authorities to make their conclusions from our research, and apply them in the best way they can. Those researchers who make decisive, definitive controversial conclusions, may be disrobed, imprisoned, expelled from the country, or murdered. All that because they didn't follow the basic rules of research. Objective researcher, just like a scientist, observes, compares, analyzes, and records the data that were gathered. Higher authorities then decide whether the controversial implications are comfortable today, or whether they should be put aside for the future. Any researcher may be wrong, and therefore uncomfortable ideas should be rechecked by others and corrected if possible, now and in the future.

2. Why Did the Buddha Introduce Kathina?

When we study the main Pāli scriptures, so called *Mūla-Pāli*, we should be very careful. The environment of the stories in the scriptures was entirely different from our present environment. The public beliefs and traditions were entirely different from present public beliefs and traditions. The social and economic situation were entirely different from the present social and economic situation. The attitude to language and communication was entirely different from the present attitude to language and communication. Technology and health-care were also entirely different from the present technology and health-care. Only with this attitude it is possible to look at the text objectively and avoid distorting the learned data by wrong attitude or wrong expectations. To help us in this effort to be objective, we have the *Aṭṭhakathā*, the ancient Pāli Commentaries. Pāli Commentaries were not written by ven. Buddhaghosa. In the fifth century CE they were translated by ven. Buddhaghosa from Sinhalese to Pāli. According to certain

pavivekāya; kosajjāya saṃvattanti, no vīriyārambhāya; dubbharatāya saṃvattanti, no subharatāyā'ti, ekamsena, gotami, dhāreyyāsi – 'neso dhammo, neso vinayo, netaṃ satthusāsana'nti." - *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 8.2.1(6).3. *Samkhitta Sutta*)

⁴ *Āṅguttara Nikāya* 1.14.6. *Chaṭṭha Vagga* – "*Aveccappasannānaṃ yadidaṃ sūrambaṭṭho*". The following story is the summarized account of *Aṭṭhakathā* to this verse.

references to Sri Lanka contained therein, the Sinhalese version of Pāli Commentaries may have been finalized in second or third century after Christ.

When we talk about *kathina*, it is first important to know what the word *kathina* actually means. Unfortunately, it seems that there is no definition of the word *kathina* in the Pāli Commentaries in the sections on declaration of the *kathina* event in *Vinaya's Mahāvagga*, nor even in the related portion in *Parivārapāli*. Pāli Commentary for *Cūlavagga* however contains this definition: "*Kathinanti nissenṇimpi tattha attharitabbakaṭṭasārakakilañjānaṃ aññatarampi*." ⁶ (= "*Kathina* is in fact a ladder, there for spreading the screw-pine stalk mats, fibre mats, or even other (things)."). Mahāgandhāyone Sayadaw U Janakābhivamsa, regarding sewing and dying a robe-to-be, explains "သင်္ကန်းဖြန့်၍ အဖျားကို ဒုတိတန်း၌ ချည်ပြီးလျှင် ချုပ်ရသည်။" (= "Having spread the robe, the corners are tied to the row of sticks and then (the robe) is sewn."). ⁶ It is generally accepted that this explanation has nothing to do with the *kathina* festival, and that it is not the correct explanation of the word in *Kathinakkhandhaka*. However, I didn't find any other explanation for the word *kathina* alone in *Vinaya Piṭaka* or the Pāli Commentaries. From the text mentioned above we learn that *kathina* is a kind of frame for sewing robes, and *attharana* means spreading the robes over the frame. If this is the correct understanding, then the purpose of introducing the event of *kathina* was to encourage and enable monks to sew robes. The Buddha had compassion to the forest-dwelling three-rober monks, who came to see Him from far away, drenched by the rain after their Rains-retreat. With the allowance to sew robes along with the five privileges, monks gained a better opportunity to collect the little robes donated by poor villagers, and sew them in one good robe for their friend who needed a new robe, and thus train in generosity. This would be however strange, because the Buddha's monks sewed robes since the very beginning of Buddha's Dispensation. Perhaps the novelty here is, that the monks are supposed to dedicate the pieces of robes they received, for one selected monk, and they do so by an official act of *Sanḥa-kamma*. Intriguingly, neither Sayadaw U Janakābhivamsa⁷ nor even the Pāli-Burmese Dictionary of Masoyein Teacher's Union⁸ mention the meaning of "frame" under the Pāli word *kathina* in this context of *Kathinakkhandhaka's kathina* event.

The Commentary to the *Kathinakkhandhaka*⁹ explains "*sace kathinatthāro paññatto abhaviṣṣa, ete bhikkhū ekaṃ cīvaraṃ ṭhapetvā santaruttarena āgacchantā na evaṃ kilantā assu*" (= "if the spreading of *kathina* is declared, those monks will come without one robe, only in the upper and lower robe, and (thus) won't be so tired.") This might be interpreted as that the Buddha in fact introduced the *kathina* event to

⁵ *Cūlavagga-Atṭhakathā - 5. Khuddakavattukhandhakam - Khuddakavattukathā - par. 256.*

⁶ Sayadaw U Janakābhivamsa, Mahāgandhāyone Sayadaw, explains in his *Cūlavagga Bhāṣāṭīkā* [ဗုဒ္ဓဝဂ္ဂဘာသာဋီကာ] (p.146) : "နိဿေကီဝိ-ကားအပေါင်သည်လည်းကောင်း၊ တတ္ထ-ထိုကားပေါင်၌၊ အတ္ထရိတပ္ပကတသာရကကိလ္လနန-ခင်းထိုက်သော သင်ဖြူးဖျာတို့တွင်၊ အညတရမ္ပိ-အမှတ်မထား တစ်ပါးပါးသည်လည်းကောင်း၊ ကထိန္နန္တိ-မည်၏။ [ရှေးနိဿယ၌ "နိဿေကီဝိ-ကန်ယင်းပေါင်သည်လည်းကောင်း"ဟု ပေး၏၊ စန့်နေသော ကန်ထားသော ယင်းပေါင်ဟု ဆိုလိုဟန်တူသည်၊ ရှေးက ထန်းတက်လှေကားကို "ယင်း"ဟု ခေါ်သည်၊ နိဿေကီမ္ပိဟု ဒုတိယန္တရီလျှင် "နိဿေကီမ္ပိ-ကိုလည်းကောင်း၊ အညတရမ္ပိ-ကိုလည်းကောင်း"ဟု ပေး၍ အနုဇာနာမိ၌စပ်။"]

⁷ *Mahāvā Bhāṣāṭīkā* [မဟာဝါဘာသာဋီကာ] (2nd vol., p.167); although Sayadaw U Janakābhivamsa treats the word *kathina* in detail in a footnote, he doesn't even mention that it can mean "frame". The meaning accepted by the sayadaw is the one given by Sub-Commentaries, which I will mention below in the text.

⁸ "*Tiṭṭhaka Pāli-Myanmar Abhidhan* [တိတိဋ္ဌက ပါဠိ-မြန်မာ အဘိဓာန်]" , The Union of Masoyein Leading Teachers headed by the great venerable Abhidhajamahārāṭṭhaguru Masoyein Sayadaw, Ministry of Religious Issues, 2005; vol.5, p.197, term ကထိန္န .

⁹ *Mahāvagga-Atṭhakathā - 7. Kathinakkhandhakam - Kathinānujānanakathā - par.306.*

reduce certain strict rules for the comfort of monks. Then, it is only the Sub-Commentaries, composed a thousand or more years after the Pāḷi Commentaries, who explain the word *kathina* separately. Sub-Commentaries explain that *kathina* actually means the "hardness", "firmness", or "stability" of the five privileges (*kathinānisamsā*). All Sub-Commentaries to *Vinaya Piṭaka*¹⁰ explain that *kathina* has the meaning of "*pañcānisamse antokaraṇasamatthatāya thiranti*" (= "the hardness of the ability to include the five privileges"). Based on this sentence, *Tipiṭakadhara* Sayadaw U Indapāla, by his great compassion, explained to me in a letter that here "*k*" stands for "*karaṇa*", (doing), and "*thina*" stands for "*thira*", (firmness). If this is the correct understanding, then the purpose to introduce the event of *kathina* was to give monks more freedom in movement and handling robes, with which making new robes would be more comfortable. The Sub-Commentarial interpretation seems to imply that *kathina* is more the event of loosening Vinaya rules, rather than of loving-kindness and generosity.

The great masters who composed Sub-Commentaries have provided us with magnificent tool to understand the Pāḷi Commentaries and the main text of *Pāḷi-Mūḷa*. However, the authors of Sub-Commentaries were neither Buddhas, nor were they omniscient. As researchers, we need to compare their ideas to the main scripture of Pāḷi and the Pāḷi Commentaries. Based on the account of Commentaries we may discuss whether in the Buddha's declaration of spreading of *kathina* the word *kathina* originally meant the frame for spreading and sewing robes or whether it rather meant firmness or stability of the five privileges received by monks of a monastery. *Tipiṭakadhara* Sayadaw U Indapāla gave me this simile – suppose that in summer, after their examination, children have three months holiday after school. Their parents would go outside for travel and promise the children that if these children stay whole three months at home, they will get various presents. Then, after three months, the children would get various presents from their parents – because they obediently stayed at home. In this way, monks who stay in a monastery for three months without travelling, will then be rewarded by the five privileges. Ven. Ṭhānissaro¹¹ argues, that if the Buddha just wanted to confer the privileges on monks, He could have simply required unbroken Rains-retreat. Because the Buddha, for the *kathina* event, required robes to be sewn, it is therefore more probable that the word *kathina* primarily means "frame". The Buddhist tradition of last millenium however dictates that *kathina* means "hardness" of the five privileges, and based on that premise evolved the modern *kathina* events.

- To summarize this point, there are two possible purposes why the event of *kathina* was introduced:
- (1) either to encourage monks to sew robes for a selected friend and thus train in loving-kindness, compassion, and generosity, or
 - (2) to make monks' rain and winter season more comfortable, esp. if monks sewed their robes.

¹⁰ *Sāratthadīpanī-Ṭīkā-3 – 7. Kathinakkhandhakaṃ – par.306; Vimativinodanī-Ṭīkā – 7. Kathinakkhandhako – par.306; Vajirabuddhi-Ṭīkā – 7. Kathinakkhandhakavaṇṇanā – par.306; Vinayālikāra-Ṭīkā – 29. Kathinatthāraviniṇchayakathā – par.226.*

¹¹ "*Buddhist Monastic Code*", ven. Ṭhānissaro, 2011; PDF p.252.

3. Why and How Do the *Kathina* Privileges (*kathinānisamsā*) become valid?

"Anujānāmi, bhikkhave, vassaṃvuṭṭhānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ kathinaṃ attharituṃ. Atthatakathinānaṃ vo, bhikkhave, pañca kappissanti."

Let's translate this sentence with *kathina* as "hardness (of five privileges)":

"Monks, I allow the monks who spent their Rains-retreat, to spread (robes) on the frame (for sewing robes). To those, monks, who spread (robes) on the frame (for sewing robes), there will be five (things) allowable."

If we examine this translation carefully, we may realize that with *kathina* as "hardness (of five privileges)" the monks in fact decide on gaining five privileges, and because of that they will gain five privileges. Altogether these monks will gain ten privileges.

Now let's translate this sentence with *kathina* as "frame for sewing robes":

"Monks, I allow the monks who spent their Rains-retreat, to spread the hardness (of five privileges). To those, monks, who spread the hardness of five privileges, there will be five (things) allowable."

In this case monks are going to prepare a robe in a special kind of way, as the Pāḷi text later instructs, and if the preparation is correct, the monks will gain five privileges. However, great sayadaws of Myanmar reject this translation.

If spreading *kathina* was done properly, monks gain five privileges:

- (1) *Anāmantacāra* (the act of visiting houses of lay people without informing a fellow-monk)
- (2) *Asamādānacāro* (the act of going outside monastery without taking all three robes)
- (3) *Gaṇabhojana* (accepting meal-invitation even for four specific monks, not as a *Saṅgha-dāna*)
- (4) *Yāvadatthacīvara* (keeping as many robes as one desires)
- (5) and *yo ca tattha cīvaruppāda* (whatever robe is received in the monastery, that is the property of the resident monks)

The Buddha gave these privileges to monks right after He allowed the spreading of *kathina*. Thus the privileges are indivisible part of the *kathina* event. We have a problem here, however. The commentary to the origin story of *kathina* says, that the monks who arrived to see the Buddha after their Rains-retreat, drenched by rain, were in fact following all thirteen ascetic practices: *"Ime pana terasāpi dhutaṅgāni samādāyeva vattanti."* (= "These (monks) however follow all of the thirteen ascetic practices.")¹² The thirteen ascetic practices include *paṃsukūlika dhutaṅga*. The monks therefore did not accept robes donated by lay people. If we believe the Commentaries, then three of the five privileges given by the Buddha in the *Mahāvaggapāli* would be useless for these monks. (1) *Anāmantacāra* helps monks to visit more families and therefore accept more robes given by the lay people, (2) *gaṇabhojana* also helps monks to visit more families and therefore accept more robes given by the lay people, and then (3) *yo ca tattha cīvaruppāda* speaks about robes given by lay people to Saṅgha. Or, shall we be heretics and say, that the

¹² *Mahāvagga-Atthakathā – 7. Kathinakkhandhakam – Kathinānujānanakathā – par.306.*

Vinaya Commentaries should not be trusted when they say that the monks of the *kathina* origin story were following all thirteen *dhutaṅgas*? This is yet another things which higher authorities may decide.

I would like to analyze whether these privileges are "hard". *Tipiṭakadhara* Sayadaw U Indapāla shared with me that "hardness" in this context means that the five privileges earned by the monks "never changes". In other words, the Buddha's selection of five privileges never changes, and the fact that monks may earn these five privileges, if they fulfil the requirements, will also never change. Moreover, the spreading of *kathina* is "firm" or "steady", because it will always yield the five privileges for the monks who attended it.

There are two main requirements to obtain these privileges – to spend the first Rains-retreat in one monastery, and to carry out the official Saṅgha procedure of *kathina* in the correct way. The privileges are then lost by eight different ways in two aspects. The eight ways are all different situations of the monk selected for the *kathina* robe donation, who goes outside the monastery without intention to return and one way or another finishes or cancels the making of the robe. In some cases the monk would return or not even go out, however his fellow-monks would decide to cancel the privileges officially.¹³

The benefit of the privileges is to collect little robes with more freedom of movement and freedom in handling robes. However, they are either all five or none. The fifth doesn't allow the resident monks to let visitor monks receive robes donated to *Saṅgha* inside the *sīmā* boundary of the monastery.¹⁴ In *Mahāvagga* is mentioned a story of two monks who visited a monastery. Lay people were happy about these visitors and arranged robe donation for *Saṅgha*. The visitor monks then told to the resident monks: "As we, friends, understand the teachings taught by the Blessed One, those robes (pertain) only to you until the *kathina* (privileges) are cancelled."¹⁵ In *Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga* we learn that if the lay people want to give robes to *Saṅgha* then it is good to cancel the privileges.¹⁶ Nowadays, after the monks who spent their Rains-retreat in the monastery carry out the official *Saṅgha* procedure of donating a robe for a selected monk and thus gain the five privileges, when monks from outside visit that monastery to attend the lay people's robe donation ceremony, the visitor monks are given robes even though the five privileges were not yet cancelled by the resident monks. That is because the lay people donate those robes to monks

¹³ See Appendix I. for the complete enumeration of the eight ways that lead to loss of privileges.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Sayadaw U Vajirapāṇibhivamsa who corrected my misunderstanding. The idea that the fifth privilege is limited only for donations inside *khaṇḍasīmā* or even *mahāsīmā*, and all donations outside these *sīmās* can be accepted by visitor monks, that is all wrong understanding. The "*sīmā*" which demarcates the limits of the fifth privilege is *upacārasīmā*. Ven. Aggacitta explains: "Normally, when robes are donated to the Sangha, they are distributed according to seniority among all members of the Sangha present within the monastery compound (*upacarasima*) during the time of distribution. But after the *kathina* has been spread in a particular monastery, and while *kathina* privileges are still in effect, robes that accrue to the Sangha are to be distributed among the holders of *kathina* privileges only. In other words, during the time of distribution, other visiting senior monks who are present within the monastery compound are not entitled to any *Saṅghika* robe at all." ("Kathina Then and Now", Aggacitta Bhikkhu, Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, Malaysia, 2001 (republished as PDF by Buddha Dhamma Education Association Inc.); p.46) . If the donor of the robes specifies that he wants to give robes to all monks inside a certain *sīmā*, for example *khaṇḍa-sīmā* or *udakukkhepa-sīmā*, then all the donated robes will be distributed among the present monks including the visiting monks.

¹⁵ *Mahāvaggapāli* - 8. *Cīvarakkhandhako* - 222. *Saṅghikacīvaruppāḍakathā* : "Tena kho pana samayena dve bhāṭikā therā, āyasmā ca isidāso āyasmā ca isibhaṭṭo, sāvatthiyaṃ vassaṃvuṭṭhā aññataraṃ gāmakāvāsaṃ agamaṃsu. Manussa cirassāpi therā āgatāti sacīvarāni bhāṭāni adaṃsu. Āvāsikā bhikkhū there pucchimsu – "imāni, bhante, saṅghikāni cīvarāni there āgama uppannāni, sādiyissanti therā bhāga"nti. Therā evamāhaṃsu – "yathā kho mayaṃ, āvuso, bhagavatā dhammaṃ desitaṃ ājānāma, tumhākaṃyeva tāni cīvarāni yāva kathinassa ubbhārāyā"ti."

¹⁶ *Pācittiya-pāli* - 3. *Nissaggiyakandaṃ* (*bhikkhunīvibhaṅgo*) - 1. *Pattavaggo* - 2. *Dutiyasikkhāpadaṃ*

individually. To prevent unnecessary quarrels for robes, (i.e. the case when the visitor monks would desire the donated robes), it is traditionally arranged that all donations of robes, when the privileges are in action, are given individually to each monks. Ven. Aggacitta, a learned elder monk from Malaysia, explains:

"When I was in Mahasi Meditation Centre and Panditarama in Burma, I noticed that during the kathina ceremony, the kathina sponsor offered to the Sangha only one robe (out of the set of three robes), usually a sanghāti [outer robe] for spreading the kathina. Other accessory robes were not offered to the Sangha, but were given, verbally and physically, to individual monks – both resident monks as well as invited guest monks. By verbally, I mean there was mass recitation in Burmese, announcing that the accessory robes were given to individual monks rather than to the Sangha as a whole."¹⁷

If the robes are given to the *Saṅgha* of the visitor-monk's monastery, it is however also acceptable, just like the individual donation: "*Sace pana jambudīpe thito "tambapaṇṇidīpe saṅghassa dammī"ti deti, tambapaṇṇidīpato ekopi gantvā sabbesaṃ gaṇhituṃ labhati.*"¹⁸ = "If, however, (the robe donor) gives (robe to a monk) when (the monk) is staying in India, (saying) "I give (this robe) to the *Saṅgha* of Sri Lanka", then even if a single (monk) has come (from Sri Lanka), he (i.e. the Sri Lankan monk) can take all of (the donated robes)."

The eight ways of losing the privileges always consist of these two aspects:

- (1) the robe impediment (*cīvarapalibodha*) – either lost or destroyed, finished, or not desired; and
- (2) the monastery impediment (*āvāsapalibodha*) – going outside without the intention to return.

If one of the impediments is effectuated, the five privileges are not yet lost. To lose the five privileges both of the impediments must be effectuated. This was very useful if the resident monks were still working on a robe for their fellow monk, and he had to go outside the monastery to accept a donation outside or listen to Dhamma discourse in a monastery far away. The robe which was still under work could thus be finished without any difficulties. Even after finishing the robe and donating it to the selected monk, the privileges are not lost – because only the robe impediment was effectuated, not the monastery impediment. In other words, after donating the *kathina* robe to the selected monk, the other monks can start working on their robes with the same comfort, unless they leave the monastery without the intention to return or unless they officially cancel the privileges.

Now the problem I would like to discuss is the difference between the situation in the Buddha's time and the situation today. In the Buddha's time it was very difficult to gain robes, and if one got a robe, it would be a little piece, let's say five percent, or ten percent of a complete robe. To make a single robe it would be necessary to participate in twenty or ten donations of robes, then sew them, and finally dye them. Therefore whatever opportunity for donation of robe there was, it was very valuable. For this the

¹⁷ "Kathina Then and Now", Aggacitta Bhikkhu, Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, Malaysia, 2001 (republished as PDF by Buddha Dhamma Education Association Inc.); pp.47-48 .

¹⁸ *Vinaya Piṭaka Aṭṭhakathā – Mahāvagga-Aṭṭhakathā - 8. Cīvarakkhandhakam - Aṭṭhacīvaramātikākathā – par. 379*

fifth privilege is essential – because it protects the resident monk from other monks coming and reducing the residents' gain of robes. Today this is not the case at all. Not only that monks get complete, sewn, and dyed robes, but they get so many that there is sometimes not enough place to store them in their monastery. Thus the purpose of the *kathina*, namely to help monks in making new robes easily, is no more necessary in most of monasteries today. In most monasteries *kathina* ceremony has become the means of loosening Vinaya rules, nothing but that. The difficulty we have here is, that when monks do *kathina* with donated complete robes, the robe impediment is effectuated. Thus only the residence impediment keeps the privileges. After *kathina*, if any monk leaves the monastery without the intention to return, all of his privileges are lost. For the monks who travel and move from monastery to monastery right after the Rains-retreat, *kathina* is very fragile.

To summarize this point, there are two ways how the purpose of *kathina* privileges changed since the Buddha's time:

1. Instead of collective work on something very difficult and rare to get, each monk today obtains complete robes right at the moment of donation. This allows them to invite visitor monks and insuring that lay people do not intend a *Saṅgha-dāna*, the resident monks share donations with the visitor monks.
2. Instead of making use of the privileges to collect little robes, worry that they are not enough, or worry that they get lost or stolen, today the privileges are used to gain freedom regarding invitations for meal, visiting supporters, and handling large amounts of robe donations.

4. What was the Original Role of Lay People In the Event of *Kathina*?

In the modern times lay people are so exalted and praised for their *kathina* donations. Interestingly, we do not find a single mention throughout the original *Mūla-Pāḷi*, Pāḷi Commentaries, not even in Pāḷi Sub-Commentaries, that offering robes during *kathina* festival would be even a mustard-seed more powerful than offering of robes to Saṅgha at any other time.¹⁹ Unfortunately, I can find no Pāḷi text approved by the Sixth Buddhist Council which would support the otherwise.

A Burmese proverb goes: "ဘုရားမှာတော့စိန်၊ ကျောင်းမှာတော့သိမ်၊ သင်္ကန်းမှာတော့ကထိန်။" (= "For pagoda – diamond, for monastery – the Sīma hall, (and) for robes - the *kathina*.") This proverb means, that the most exquisite donation for pagoda is diamond, the most exquisite donation for monastery is Sīma hall, and the most exquisite donation of robes is the donation of *kathina* robes. Although this is generally accepted throughout Myanmar, I am not aware of a direct support from the Pāḷi scriptures, I mean those accepted by the Sixth Buddhist Council.

¹⁹ Although we can see celebration of the *kathina* event by monks who sewed a robe for another monk in the Pāḷi text of *Buddhavaṃsa* (10. *Padumabuddhavaṃso* – par. 7), we cannot find absolutely no mention of lay people's role in the *kathina* event in any Pāḷi text approved by the Sixth Buddhist Council. Even in the *Dakkhiṇāvibhaṅga Sutta* of *Majjhima Nikāya* (sutta no. 142), which praises the donation to *Saṅgha* so immensely, we do not find the word "*kathina*" a single time.

The *Vināyālikāra-Ṭīkā*'s definition of the word *kathina* – "*kathiyate silāghate pasamsiyate buddhādīhīti kathinaṃ*"²⁰ (= "It (is called) *kathina* because it is spoken of, extolled, and praised by Buddhas and others") doesn't say anything about people's donation. *Kathina* in the Pāḷi Vinaya is an event of monks for monks, it was allowed for monks, and it should be carried out by monks. Inside the Vinaya description of *kathina* there is not a single word which would specifically, explicitly praise people's donation of *kathina* robes. In the Appendix III. I list a number of Pāḷi stories and verses about donation to Saṅgha, which have been misrepresented as *kathina* stories. For example, praise of donation to Saṅgha by king Sakka, the king of gods mentioned in *Vimānavatthu* and *Kathāvatthu*, or the escape from hell of Dīghajayantadamiḷa described in the Commentaries to *Anguttara* and *Majjhima Nikāyas*.²¹ They do not contain the word *kathina* even a single time.

The fact that I am trying to explain is, that donation to Saṅgha throughout the 365 days of every year is the highest and the most noble. I am refuting the entirely wrong view that high and noble donation of robes happens only during the event of *kathina*. The more surprising thing is, that nowadays offering of *kathina* robes is done to monks individually, which denies the lay people the opportunity for the truly high and noble donation to Saṅgha.

The *Buddhavaṃsa* however seems to imply praise for monks who sewed *kathina* robes for another monk: "When kaṭṭhina robe-material had accrued at the time of the formal spreading out of the kaṭṭhina-cloth monks sewed a robe for the General under Dhamma."²² Even if this sentence is meant to praise monks for their gratitude to the elder Sāla, Paduma Buddha's wisest disciple, it however doesn't mention donation of lay people at all.

In the *Kathinakkhandhaka* of *Vinaya Piṭaka's Mahāvagga* the Buddha mentions 18 characteristics of robe which are spread over the frame or, if you will, 18 ways how the hardness of the five privileges is obtained. In short they explain that the robe should not be obtained by request, it should be owned, and it should be in accordance with the Vinaya rules for making robes. Only two ways of obtaining the robe are mentioned - *paṃsukūlena*, i.e. from discarded cloth, and *pāpaṇikena*, i.e. picked from the waste of a shop. There is not a single mention that the robes may be donated by lay people. Monk who has a robe that he wants to include in making the *kathina* robe, can donate that robe to Saṅgha. *Kathina* robe is made of robes donated to Saṅgha, not of robes possessed privately. Robes possessed or gained privately may be donated to Saṅgha even by monks.²³ The Commentarial mention that the monks of the *kathina* origin story

²⁰ *Vināyālikāra-Ṭīkā* - 29. *Kathinatthāraviniṇṇayakathā* - par.226.

²¹ See a number of such cases in Appendix III.

²² Translation by I.B. Horner in "*The Clarifier of the Sweet Meaning (Madhurattavilāsini) – Commentary on the Chronicle of Buddhas (Buddhavaṃsa)*", I.B. Horner, PTS, Oxford, 2008; p.259. *Buddhavaṃsapāḷi* – 10. *Padumabuddhavaṃso* - par.7: "*Kathinatthārasamaye, uppanne kathinacivare; Dhammasenāpatitthāya, bhikkhū sibbiṃsu [yācīṃsu (ka.)] cīvaram.*"

²³ *Mahāvagga-Aṭṭhakathā* – 7. *Kathinakkhandhakam* - *Kathinānūjānanakathā* - par.306 - "*Kathinaṃ kena dinnam vaṭṭati? Yena kenaci devena vā manussena vā pañcannam vā sahadhammikānam aññatarena dinnam vaṭṭati.*" (= "By who is the donation of *kathina* appropriate? The donation is appropriate by any deity, human, or any of the five Dhamma-fellows.") [Dhamma-fellows are these five – *bhikkhu, bhikkhunī, sikkhamānā, sāmaṇera, sāmaṇerī* – *Mahāniddeśa-Aṭṭhakathā* - 14. *Tuvaṭṭakasuttaniddeśavaṇṇanā* - par.164.

followed all thirteen *dhutaṅgas*,²⁴ if we believe it, also supports the idea that lay people are not indispensable for the *kathina* event.

The fact that robes donated by lay people to *Saṅgha* can be used for *kathina* is evident from the five privileges. However, this doesn't mean that lay people are indispensable. Monks can gather robes from heap of junk, clean them, sew them, dye them, and use them for *kathina* without a single square inch donated by lay people. Or at least this is what I understand from *paṃsukūlena atthataṃ hoti kathinaṃ*, (*kathina* is spread by a robe from heap of junk) and *pāpaṇikena atthataṃ hoti kathinaṃ* (*kathina* is spread by a robe from the waste of a shop).²⁵ These sentences are not taken seriously by most monks today, and we will never hear them during the Dhamma discourses given to lay people.

The Sinhalese apocryphal text "*Kathinavaṃsa*" mentions special benefits which lay people gain for offering *kathina* robe in relation to the five privileges that are supposed to be caused by the lay people's robe donation. Intriguingly, even the *Apadānapāḷi*, which is often taken as the most resourceful text of benefits for various donations, contains not a single case of the word *kathina* or even the benefits for lay people who offer it. The Sinhalese apocryphal text "*Kathinavaṃsa*" also explains that the word *kathina* means "hard as a diamond", in the sense that offering of robes for the *kathina* ceremony is very difficult – and as much as it is difficult, it is also immensely meritorious. I do not find this meaning of *kathina* as "hard" in terms of difficulty to donate robes anywhere in the Pāḷi texts approved by the Sixth Buddhist Council.

I have selected the metaphor of "diamond" for my speech about *kathina* today with the attribute of hard and fragile, because the festival of *kathina* is unblemished, and pristine, but at the same time the *kathināṇisaṃsā*, the advantages that the monks gain, are easily lost.²⁶ The diamond of *kathina* in its original meaning and purpose seems to be lost in the scriptures, rarely followed in monasteries today.

The rainy season ends with one significant product – crop. Crop is not just rice or beans, but also cotton. The "robe-making season" (*cīvarakārasamayo*) comes at the end of rainy season simply because cotton is ready to be harvested and woven into cloth. In the Buddha's time this was the period when people obtained new cloth and could donate it to monks. *Kathina* therefore comes at this time with great donations of people not because it would be magically or astrologically auspicious, but simply because it is possible for people to donate. With the technological and economical progress, people took over the responsibility for monks' gain of new robes and the *kathina* period was selected as the historically most appropriate time.

To summarize this point, although there may have been countless *kathina* events in the Buddha's time without a single piece of robe coming from lay people, in modern time *kathina* without lay people is

²⁴ "*Ime pana terasāpi dhutaṅgāni samādāyeva vattanti.*" (= "These (monks) however follow all of the thirteen ascetic practices.") - *Mahāvagga-Atthakathā* – 7. *Kathinakkhandhakaṃ* - *Kathināṇujānanakathā* - par.306.

²⁵ *Vinaya Piṭaka - Mahāvaggapāḷi* - 7. *Kathinakkhandhako* - 187. *Kathināṇujānanā* – par. 309 and *Vinaya Piṭaka - Parivārapāḷi - Mahāsaṅgāmo* – *Kathinabheda* - 1. *Kathinaatthātādi*.

²⁶ The idea that the privileges are more or less meaningless (useless) for most of monks in the modern era has been suggested and explained in detail by ven. Aggacitta in his "*Kathina Then and Now*", pp.70-80.

unthinkable. With reference to Pāli scriptures we may find evidence and support for *kathina* event attended by *pāṃsukūlika* monks, i.e. the monks who do not accept any robes donated by lay people.

5. The Significance of Kathina Today

Throughout the year there are various holidays, such as Mothers' Day, Teachers' Day, Valentine (or Lovers' Day), Independence Day, Vesākha (the Buddha's Day) and many others. These days inspire people to remember their mothers, teachers, their partners, their countries, etc. The days selected for *kathina* by each monastery may be taken for the day when people remember the *Saṅgha* of monks. People may remember the peace and inspiration which they get in a monastery, either by listening to Dhamma or practicing meditation according to an enlightened master. The *kathina* days may remind lay people of the benefits which the *Saṅgha* of monks brings for society, such as encouraging virtue, teaching Dhamma or meditation to gain equanimity and peace, showing satisfaction with little by one's own example, and the opportunity to join the monks and dedicate oneself to the Ultimate Peace. In this sense *kathina* is a very important festival where lay people are indispensable.

May all beings be happy and healthy!

Appendix I. – The Eight Ways That Lead to Loss of Privileges

In "*Kathein Ayathar* [ကထိနအရသာ]", written by Aggamahāpaṇḍita U Ariya (Sayadaw of the forest monastery in Nyaung Lay Pin Town), the Burmese classic explaining *kathina* in details, we can find a detailed explanation of these eight *palibodhas* on pp.73-77 . Here is the explanation in brief:

- (1) *Pakkamanantikā*, after the robe was finished and donated to the selected monk, he goes outside the monastery without intention to return.
- (2) *Niṭṭhānantikā*, taking the unfinished *kathina* robe with him he goes outside the monastery without intention to return, and then he finishes the robe elsewhere.
- (3) *Sanniṭṭhānantikā*, taking the unfinished *kathina* robe with him he goes outside the monastery without intention to finish the robe at all.
- (4) *Nāsanantikā*, taking the unfinished *kathina* robe with him he goes outside the monastery, and while finishing the robe elsewhere the robe gets lost or decayed.
- (5) *Savanantikā*, taking the unfinished *kathina* robe with him he goes outside the monastery, and then he gets the news that the *kathina* privileges were officially cancelled in the monastery where he spent the Rains-retreat.
- (6) *Āsāvacchedikā*, he goes outside the monastery without intention to return and loses the desire to be donated the *kathina* robe from his fellow-monks.

(7) *Sīmātikantikā*, after the robe was finished and donated to the selected monk, he goes outside the monastery and decides not to return.

(8) *Saubbhārā* (also known as *sahubbhārā*), taking the unfinished *kathina* robe with him he goes outside the monastery, and when he returns he and the other monks officially cancel the privileges. (There is also *antarubbhārā*, where the monk doesn't go outside the monastery and with the other monks officially cancels the privileges.)

Appendix II. – Donation of *Kathina* Robes according to *Sīmā*

<i>Pāli-Atthakathā</i> ²⁷	English translation by monk Sarana
<i>Evametāsu sīmāsu khaṇḍasīmāya kenaci kammena sannipatitaṃ saṅghaṃ disvā</i>	Thus among those <i>sīmās</i> , seeing the Saṅgha gathered for a certain (official) procedure in a <i>khaṇḍa-sīmā</i> ,
<i>"ettheva sīmāya saṅghassa demī"ti vutte yāvatikā bhikkhū antokhaṇḍasīmagatā, tehi bhājetabbaṃ.</i>	(the lay person) says: "I give (robes) only to the Saṅgha in that <i>sīmā</i> ", (then) those (monks) should distribute (the robes) to all monks that are inside the <i>khaṇḍa-sīmā</i> .
<i>Tesaṃyeva hi taṃ pāpuṇāti.</i>	(The robes) will be received only by them (i.e. those monks in <i>khaṇḍa-sīmā</i>).
<i>Aññesaṃ sīmantarikāya vā upacārasīmāya vā ṭhitānampi na pāpuṇāti.</i>	The others (who stay) between <i>sīmās</i> or inside the boundaries of a monastery (but not inside the <i>khaṇḍa sīma</i>), (they) will not receive (the robes).
<i>Khaṇḍasīmāya ṭhite pana rukkhe vā pabbate vā ṭhitassa heṭṭhā vā pathavīvemajjhagatassa pāpuṇātiyeva.</i>	However, to the one staying on a tree or on a hill which is in the (area of) <i>khaṇḍa-sīmā</i> , even below, in the middle of the earth, (he) will receive (the robes).
<i>"Imissā upacārasīmāya saṅghassa dammī"ti dinnaṃ pana khaṇḍasīmāsīmantarikāsu ṭhitānampi pāpuṇāti.</i>	The (robes) given (by saying) "I give (the robes) to the Saṅgha (who stay) in the boundaries of this monastery" however will be received even by those (monks) who stay in the <i>khaṇḍa-sīmā</i> or in the interval between the boundaries.
<i>"Samānasaṃvāsasīmāya dammī"ti dinnaṃ pana khaṇḍasīmāsīmantarikāsu ṭhitānaṃ na pāpuṇāti.</i>	The (robes) given (by saying) "I give (the robes) (to the monks) in the <i>sīma</i> shared by all present Saṅgha (<i>samānasaṃvāsasīmā</i>), however will not be received by those who stay in the <i>khaṇḍa-sīmā</i> or in the interval between the boundaries.

²⁷ Vinaya Piṭaka Atthakathā – Mahāvagga-Atthakathā - 8. Cīvarakkhandhakaṃ - Atthacīvaramātikākathā – par. 379

<i>Avippavāsa-sīmā-lābhasīmāsu dinnam tāsū sīmāsu antogatānaṃ pāpuṇāti.</i>	(The robes) given in the <i>sīmā</i> of non-laid-aside (robes) (<i>avippavāsa-sīmā</i>) [i.e. <i>sīmā</i> where monks can keep their robes even when they leave the monastery] or in the <i>sīmā</i> of gain (<i>lābha-sīmā</i> [i.e. established by king, not by Saṅgha]) will be received by those (monks) who entered those <i>sīmās</i> .
<i>Gāmasīmādīsu dinnam tāsam sīmānaṃ abbhantare baddhasīmāya thitānampi pāpuṇāti.</i>	(The robes) given in the village- <i>sīmā</i> etc. will be received by those who stay inside the demarcated (<i>baddha</i>) boundaries of those <i>sīmās</i> .
<i>Abbhantarasīmāudakukkhepasīmāsu dinnam tattha antogatānaṃyeva pāpuṇāti.</i>	(The robes) given in the internal <i>sīmā</i> (<i>abbhantarasīmā</i>) or in the water <i>sīmā</i> will be received only by (those monks) who entered there.
<i>Janapadarattharajjadīpacakkavālasīmāsupi gāmasīmādīsu vuttasadisoyeva vinicchayo.</i>	The resolution of boundaries of state, country, kingdom, island, or the world-cycle is same as in the village- <i>sīmā</i> etc.

<i>Sace pana jambudīpe thito "tambapaṇṇidīpe saṅghassa dammī"ti deti, tambapaṇṇidīpato ekopi gantvā sabbesaṃ gaṇhituṃ labhati.</i>	If, however, (the robe donor) gives (robe to a monk) when (the monk) is staying in India, (saying) "I give (this robe) to the <i>Saṅgha</i> of Sri Lanka", then even if a single (monk) has come, he can take all of (the donated robes).
<i>Sacepi tatreva eko sabhāgabhikkhu sabhāgānaṃ bhāgaṃ gaṇhāti, na vāretabbo.</i>	If even one monk there (from Sri Lanka) of the same kind (i.e. same as his fellow monks from Sri Lanka) takes a portion for his fellow-monks, (he) should not be denied (that portion).
<i>Evam tāva yo sīmaṃ parāmasitvā deti, tassa dāne vinicchayo veditabbo.</i>	This the resolution that should be known, related to the donation (of robes given by a lay person) who gives (robes) after he has selected (/ "considered") the <i>sīma</i> (for the act of the donation).

Appendix III. Stories and Verses Misrepresented for Kathina

What we find a lot in the scriptures, are the benefits and merits received for general offering of robes (unspecified by season). Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw gives several of them.²⁸

²⁸ Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw's Dhamma discourse written down from audio recording, in the book "မေတ္တာစာပေ (ပထမပိုဒ်)", pp.150-166. I have no intention to find fault with the venerable Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw. It is very probable that his examples are inspired by other sayadaws. However, for the sake of reference, I found it necessary to inform the reader of my source literature.

(1) The praise of giving to the Saṅgha as a whole is given in these nice verses, which may be found in *Vimānavatthu* and *Kathāvatthu*. *Vimānavatthupāḷi* - 1. *Itthivimānaṃ* – a) 3. *Pāricchattakavaggo* – 6. *Daddallavimānavatthu* ; b) 4. *Mañjiṭṭhakavaggo* - 6. *Vihāravimānavatthu* ; *Kathāvatthupāḷi* - 17. *Sattarasamavaggo* - (174) 9. *Na vattabbaṃ saṅghassadinnāṃ mahapphalantikathā* - § 798 :

*"Tesam sudinnaṃ suhutaṃ suyitthaṃ,
Ye saṅghamuddissa dadanti dānaṃ;
Sā dakkhiṇā saṅghagatā patitṭhitā,
Mahapphalā lokavidūna vaṇṇitā.*

Tr. by I.B. Horner in *"The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon, Part IV"*, PTS, Oxford, 2005, p. 71 & 90 :

*"26 They who give gifts dedicated to the Order –
theirs is rightly given, rightly offered, rightly sacrificed.
That gift bestowed upon the Order is of great fruit,
and is praised by knowers of the world(s)."*

Tr. by Shwe Yan Aung and Mrs. Rhys Davids in *"Points of Controversy or Subjects of Discourse"*, PTS, London, 1960, p. 320 :

*"They who because of them do give their gifts,
Oblations fair, and seemly sacrifice,
They to the Order loyal, firm in faith,
Commended by the wise, win great reward."*

The author of *Kathāvatthu* himself mentions, that the verses are from the Sakka, the king of gods (now known from the *Vimānavatthu*). Again, there is no talk about *kathina* at all. The chief (if not the only one) purpose of these verses is to show, that giving to Saṅgha is much more meritorious deed, than giving to individual(s).)

(2) Giving robes is a very powerful merit, and it can save a person from going to hell – even if one dies with unclear mind.. *Aṅuttaranikāya* – *Tikanipāta-aṭṭhakathā* - 4. *Devadūtavaggo* - 6. *Devadūtasuttavaṇṇanā* (and in) *Commentary for MN 130* :

*(1) Tattha dīghajayantadamiḷo nāma attano dhammatāya sari. So kira damiḷo
sumanagirimahāvihāre ākāśacetiyaṃ rattapaṭena pūjesi, atha niraye ussadasāmaṇṇe nibbatto
aggijālasaddaṃ sutvāva attanā pūjitaṭṭhaṃ anussari, so gantvā sagge nibbatto.*

*(2) Aparopi puttassa daharabhikkhuno khalisāṭakaṃ dento pādamūle ṭhapesi, maraṇakālamhi
paṭapaṭāti sadde nimittaṃ gaṇhi, sopi ussadasāmaṇṇe nibbatto jālasaddena taṃ sāṭakaṃ anussaritvā
sagge nibbatto. Evaṃ tāva attano dhammatāya kusalaṃ kammaṃ saritvā sagge nibbattatīti.*

*(1) There Dīghajayantadamiḷa behaved according to the Dhamma. He, the Damila, indeed, offered a
dyed cloth at Ākāśa-Cetiya in the monastery on Sumana Hill. Then, when he was born at the border of
"hell of abundance" and just heard the sound of fire, he remembered his donation of cloth and left (from*

there) and was born in heaven.

(2) And another (person), who gave his son, a young monk, a rough cloak at (the son's) feet, at the time of his death had a realization by (hearing) the sound "paṭa-paṭa" [this is how "cloth" is in Pāḷi language]. He also was born at the border of the "hell of abundance," and by the sound of blazing he remembered that cloak and was born in heaven. Thus far one may be born in heaven, remembering a meritorious act done by oneself in accordance with Dhamma.

(3) There is this verse in *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta*:

*"Esa devamanussānaṃ, sabbakāmadado nidhi;
Yaṃ yadevābhipatthenti, sabbametena labbhati."*

Tr. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli in "The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning", PTS, London, 1978, pp.254-5:

*"This is a store can satisfy, every desire of gods and men.
No matter what they aspire to have, all that they get by merit's grace."*

Tr. by E.B. Cowell in "The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births", Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2006, vol. II, p. 282:

*"There is a treasury of all good things
Which both to gods and men their wishes brings."*

Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw explains this verse as if it were talking explicitly about the merits of *kathina* robes. But nothing like that is mentioned in the discourse (in *Khuddakapāṭha* - 8. *Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta*) or its commentary, or in the *Jātaka* 284 (*Sirijātakavaṇṇanā*). In the *jātaka* is the meaning explained by the Buddha Himself (tr. by E.B. Cowel, vol. II, p. 282) :

"Good sir, these beings have no other resource but their merit won in previous births; this enables you to obtain treasures in places where there is no mine."

There is no mention of *kathina* whatsoever in *Khuddakapāṭha* or *Jātaka* . But the verse is a nice illustration of merit, and the *jātaka* a wonderful account on the relation of *kamma* and luck.

(4) *Therāpadānapāḷi* - 10. *Sudhāvaggo* - 1. *Sudhāpiṇḍiyattherāpadānaṃ* :

*"Catunnamapi(ca) dīpānaṃ, issaraṃ yodha kāraye;
Ekissā pūjanāyetam, kalaṃ nāgghati soḷasiṃ."*

*"The four (great) islands, over which one might have power,
of one offering, is not worth even a part of sixteenth."*

In accordance with the Pāḷi Commentaries, Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw explains, that the verse simply means that even the treasures of Sakka, the king of gods, will not amount even to a sixteenth of the merit earned by a single donation (to Saṅgha). The "donation", stresses the sayadaw, is the offering of *kathina* robes (again, I see not a single occurrence of the word "*kathina*" the relevant

scripture).

(5) Vinayālaṅkāra-ṭīkā - 29. Kathinatthāravinicchayakathā :

"Atha vā kathīyate silāghate paṣaṃsīyate buddhādīhī kathinaṃ, ayaṃ nayo "kattha silāghāya"nti dhātvatthasaṃvaṇṇanāya ca "idañhi kathinavattaṃ nāma buddhappasattha"nti (mahāva. aṭṭha. 306) aṭṭhakathāvacanena ca sametīti daṭṭhabbo."

"Or also, the *kathina* means, (that it is) spoken of, extolled, (and) praised by the Buddhas and others." This is the way: "where is (it) extolled?" Also in the exposition on the meaning of elements - "This is, indeed, the extolling of the *kathina* ceremony by the Buddhas"²⁹ – and it should be known, that it agrees with the Commentaries."

The sayadaw used just the beginning, with a little different word order: *"Buddhādīhī kathīyate silāghate paṣaṃsīyateti kathinaṃ."* (= "Or also, the *kathina* means, (that it is) praised by the Buddhas and others as good (and) noble.")

(6) Finally, the sayadaw speaks of a Pāli sentence that one may use to rejoice from one's merit:

"aho me lābhā vata, buddhasāsanam nissāya mahantaṃ puññaṃ pasuta"nti

"See what a blessing for me! Because of the Buddha's religion, a great merit arose (for me)."

I don't find this anywhere in my scriptures. But I found a similar sentence in *Jātaka 470 (Akittijātakavaṇṇanā) :*

"aho me lābhā vata, kārapaṇṇāni nissāya mahantaṃ puññaṃ pasuta"nti

Tr. by E.B. Cowell in *"The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births"*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 2006, vol. IV, p. 151:

"See what a blessing for me! A few kāra-leaves have begotten great merit for me."

In *"Kathein Ayathar [ကထိန်အရသာ]"*, by Aggamahāpaṇḍita U Ariya (Sayadaw of the forest monastery in Nyaung Lay Pin Town), pp.26-35, we may learn even more stories from Pāli scriptures that are interpreted as related to the *kathina* event, although there is no scriptural evidence for that.

Appendix IV. Benefits of Kathina Robe Donation (for lay people)

Below is a poetic summary of the benefits that the people may get after offering robes or robe-material for *kathina* robe, and then the examples that Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw collected from the ancient Pāli texts – all are copied from Pan-Ngwe-Youn Sayadaw's preaching, which was written down in the book *"ဒေသနာပန်းခင်း (ပထမတွဲ)"* in pages 161-162:

၁။ မပန်မကြား၊ မခစား၊ လာသွားနိုင်စေ၊ ရပ်ထွေထွေ။
၂။ ကိုယ်ပိုင်ဥစ္စာ၊ ထားလိုရာ၊ ထားပါလျှက်ပေ၊ ရန်ကင်းစေ။

²⁹ Mahāvagga Aṭṭhakathā - 7. Kathinakkhandhakam - Kathinānujānanakathā – par.306

၃။ ဝတ်စားဖုံးဖုံး၊ လွန်ပြည့်စုံ၊ ကိုယ်လုံကျက်သရေ၊ လက်လက်ဝေ။
 ၄။ မိစ္ဆာအပင်း၊ ပြစ်မျိုးကင်း၊ သန့်ရှင်းစာရေ၊ ရနိုင်စေ။
 ၅။ စည်းစိမ်ဖြူဖြူ၊ လွန်ကြံ့ခိုင်၊ စိုးပိုင်လှစေ၊ တင့်ဖြိုးဝေ။

1. One gains freedom to go anywhere one needs, not getting tired or making a trouble.
 - One would be thus free like the king of gods Sakka in the Tāvātimsa heaven (= “heaven of the thirty-three”)
2. Wherever one keeps one's possession, it will be right there, free from danger.
 - This would be similar to the case of the great rich-man Jotika, whose immensely great and valuable possession was to be destroyed by the king Ajātasattu - but the king would never succeed. {The sayadaw says that this was the result of giving *kathina* robe in a previous life – but I can trace this detail neither in the DhA 416, nor anywhere else in the Pāli texts.}
3. One will have as much clothes and food as one would need – and with it his/her grace would just develop.
 - Like the prince Anuruddha, who had plenty of clothes, food and anything that he needed.
4. One's food will be always free from any kind of poison, easy to eat and digest.
 - Just like the relatives of the Buddha's chief supporter Visākhā, who were always satisfied with their food.
5. One may get great power over large kingdoms, attain psychic powers and become very famous.
 - This is compared to the great king Siridhammāsoka (the ancient king Asoka), who is depicted in certain commentarial Pāli scriptures, as ruling (not only over the formidable India), but also many miles above and below the ground.

In "*Kathein Ayathar* [ကထိန်အရသာ] ", by Aggamahāpaṇḍita U Ariya (Sayadaw of the forest monastery in Nyaung Lay Pin Town), p.32, we find the five benefits in different words:

၁။ သွားလေရာ အနှောင့်အယှက်မရှိ အန္တရာယ်ကင်းခြင်းတစ်ပါး။
 ၂။ မိမိပိုင်ပစ္စည်းတို့သည် မီးပေါင်ခံပစ္စည်းအလား မိမိနှင့် ကင်းသော်လည်း ရန်သူတို့အတွက် မပျက်စီးနိုင်ခြင်းတစ်ပါး။
 ၃။ လူသာမန်တို့နှင့်မတန်သော စားကောင်းသောက်ဖွယ် အထူးပေါများ၍ စန္ဒဂုတ်မင်းကြီးကဲ့သို့ အစားအတွက် ဘေးဥပဒ် မဖြစ်နိုင်၊ အဆိပ်ခတ်သော်လည်း အဆိပ်မတက်နိုင်ခြင်း တစ်ပါး။
 ၄။ မိမိပိုင်ပစ္စည်းတို့သည် ကာလရှည်စွာမေ့လျော့နေသော်လည်း မဆုံးပါးနိုင်ခြင်းတစ်ပါး။
 ၅။ ပစ္စည်းရှာလျှင် သူတကာထက်ထူး၍ ထိပေါက်သကဲ့သို့ အရများခြင်း တစ်ပါး။

1. Wherever one goes, there is no hindrance, absence of danger.
2. Even if one is not close to one's possession, then like the things under fire-risk insurance, it is not possible for enemies to destroy them.
3. Having abundance of food not enjoyed by ordinary people, one cannot suffer the tragedies caused by food or drink just like the great king Candagutta, even if it is poisoned, the poison will not have an effect.
4. Even if one forgets about one's possessions for a long time, they will not get used up.
5. If one desires ("searches") possession, (he/she) will gain more than anyone, as many as if one won a lottery.

Ven. Aggacitta in his "*Kathina Then and Now*", pp.80-82, shares his feelings about the benefits mentioned above and their questionable relation to lay people's robe donation and the five privileges.